

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 189811

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM LA PAZ AUG 05:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6178

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TAGS: SHUM, ES, BGOV, PINT
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR'S MEETING WITH SALVADORAN
INTEREST GROUPS

REF: PANAMA 5542

1. SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO MEETING WITH SALVADORAN
PRESIDENT AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REPORTED REFTEL,
HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR DERIAN MET SEPARATELY WITH LEADERS
OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (CD) PARTY, CATHOLIC CHURCH AND
LOCAL BUSINESS. CD LEADERS SUSPICIOUS OF ROMERO'S INTENTIONS
AND, WHILE SOMEWHAT WARY OF U.S. INTERFERENCE, ENCOURAGED US
TO USE EVERY MEANS OF PRESSURE AVAILABLE AGAINST NEW
GOVERNMENT. MEETING WITH CATHOLICS (INCLUDING JESUITS) AT
ARCHBISHOP ROMERO'S RESIDENCE RE-ENFORCED IMPRESSION OF
GROWING ALIENATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. TONE AS
SOMEWHAT SAD AND MARKED BY PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSIONS OF HOW
TO GRAPPLE WITH COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENERAL
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 189811

AND SALVADORAN REALITY IN PARTICULAR. CHURCH LEADERS WHO
APPEAR TO BE FIRMLY UNIFIED, SEE SELVES AS ONLY EXISTING
SPOKESMEN FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED, ARE SUSPICIOUS OF NEW
REGIME AND WARY THAT ASSOCIATION WITH IT MIGHT LEAD POOR TO
CONCLUSION THEY HAVE BEEN DESERTED. BUSINESS LEADERS
REPRESENTED NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE (ANEP)
WHICH MADE UP LOCAL INDUSTRY, MANUFACTURING, COMMERCIAL AND
AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS. THEIR PRESENTATION WAS SUPERFICIAL
AND DEFENSIVE. THEY SAID THEY WOULD NOT OPPOSE REFORMS WHICH
DID NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY. THEY SEEMED

INTENT ON SELLING GLOSSY PICTURE OF NEW REGIME, STRESSING AMOUNT OF MISINFORMATION ON SALVADOR CIRCULATING ABROAD. THEY HOPED THAT WITH CONCLUSION OF RICHARDSON CALL EVERYTHING WOULD NOW RETURN TO NORMAL BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND URGED THAT THE US SEND A NEW AMBASSADOR SOON. THEY SAID THEIR AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON WOULD SOON BE CHANGED SINCE HE DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH WELL. MS DERIAN URGED THAT CHANGE WAS INEVITABLE AND THAT GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE COUNTRY WOULD MEAN AN EXPANDING ECONOMY WHICH WOULD BENEFIT ALL IN THE LONG RUN. SHE PRAISED THE CURRENT SALVADORAN AMBASSADOR IN D.C. (AND FOLLOWED UP ON THIS BY DOING SO IN HER THANK YOU NOTE TO PRESIDENT ROMERO), TOLD ANEP THAT THE QUESTION OF A NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR WAS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION, SAID THAT THE RESPONSE ON THE RICHARDSON CASE WAS NOT SATISFACTORY AND EXPRESSED USG ALARM AT THE THREAT TO THE JESUITS. SHE URGED THAT WE WANT TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR AND THAT CHANGE IN SALVADOR CAN ONLY BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY INTERNAL GROUPS SUCH AS ANEP. FOLLOWING ARE ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE C. DAVID CHURCH MEETINGS. END SUMMARY.

2. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 189811

FOLLOWING CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERS MET WITH MS DERIAN AT RESIDENCE FOR BREAKFAST ON AUGUST 2: MARIANELLA GARCIA VILLAS, EDUARDO COLINDRES, JORGE ALBERTO VILLACORTA, AND MAARIO ZAMORA RIVAS. MS DERIAN EXPLAINED U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS

POLICY AND SOUGHT THEIR VIEWS ON WHETHER IT WAS HELPFUL TO THEM AND HOW IT COULD BE MOST EFFECTIVELY APPLIED, BOTH IN EL SALVADOR AND IN GENERAL.

3. FEELING SEEMED TO BE THAT THIS US POLICY MAY HAVE BORNE FRUIT IN RECENT DECREASE IN REPRESSION IN THE URBAN AREAS BUT THEY WARNED THAT REPRESSION CONTINUES IN THE RURAL AREAS, ALTHOUGH THEY TYPIFY IT AS MORE SOPHISTICATED UNDER ROMERO THAN UNDER MOLINA. THEY ADMITTED THAT WHILE IT WAS STILL EARY TO JUDGE THE NEW GOVERNMENT, IT IS BASICALLY MADE UP OF SAME PEOPLE WHO SERVED, ALBEIT IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES, UNDER MOLINA. IN ADDITION THE POWER STRUCTURE REMAINS THE SAME, I.E., NO AGRARIAN REFORM AND NO COMMITMENT TO AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION OR GREATER PRODUCTIVITY. THEY FEEL ROMERO GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM WILL RATHER ENCOMPASS TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS OF ROAD BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WHICH MAINLY BENEFIT THE RICH. CONTROL OF THE MEDIA IS CONCENTRATED IN A FEW HANDS, ONE MAN RUMORED TO BE THE GOVERNMENT'S NEXT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OWNS THREE TV CHANNELS. THE CHURCH PROVIDES THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF MEDIA COVERAGE. WITH NO HOPE FOR A FREE ELECTORAL ALTERNATIVE AND CONTINUED REPRESSION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE ON THE

HORIZON, THEY FEAR THAT THE VIOLENCE WILL ONLY GROW. THEY SAID THAT IN EL SALVADOR A MURDERER HAS GREATER ACCESS TO JUSTICE THAN A PEASANT WHO RISKS A POLITICAL QUESTION. THEY SAY THE RANK AND FILE OF THEIR PARTY IS HARRASSED AND PERSECUTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT KEEPS LISTS OF THOSE INVOLVED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR THIS PRUPOSE. THEY STATED THAT OUT OF 35 PEOPLE ON CD GOVERNING BOARD, A THIRD HAVE BEEN IN JAIL AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER AND LOCAL LEADERS NOW IN THE CAPITAL CAN'T GET BACK TO THEIR OWN CITIES. THEY RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 189811

TO MS DERIAN'S INQUIRY WHETHER THIS MEETING MIGHT PLACE THEM IN DANGER AND AGREED TO MAINTAIN FUTURE CONTACT WITH OUR EMBASSY IN CASE ITS "GOOD OFFICES" WERE NEEDED. THE CD REPRESENTATIVES PLACED LITTLE FAITH IN PRESIDENT ROMERO'S ASSURANCES THAT POLITICAL EXILES COULD RETURN, WONDERING QUOTE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THEM IF THEY DID
END QUOTE.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY THEY SAID THAT, WHILE IN THE PAST THEY HAVE CRITICIZED US INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER PEOPLE AND, WHILE THEY BELIEVE IN SELF DETERMINATION BY FREE ELECTIONS, THEY CAN BE IN ACCORD WITH AND LOOK WITH SYMPATHY UPON THE POLICY OF DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY SAID THE POLICY WOULD NATURALLY BE PROMOTED IN DIFFERENT WAYS BY DIFFERENT ADVOCATES ACCORDING TO VARYING POWER AND INFLUENCES. THEY HAD THE POWER OF THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, WE HAD OUR OWN INFLUENCE, IF WE CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR, THEY SAID, THEN WE WOULD BE IN ACCORD. THEY ALSO STRESSED THE FACT THAT THIS PROBLEM COULD NOT BE LIMITED TO EL SALVADOR BUT MUST EXTEND TO GUATEMALA AND NICARAGUA AS WELL. AS THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA INFLUENCED THE SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRY. THEY SAW LIMITED UTILITY IN THE USE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE OR AID AND PEACE CORP PROGRAMS AS A MENAS OF PRESSURE AND COMPLAINED THAT SUBJECT TO CORRUPTION AND GIVEN THE GOVERNMENTS CURRENT ECONOMIC MODEL WOULD ONLY SERVE THE WEALTHY AND NOT HELP THE PEOPLE. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF CHANNELING FUNDS THROUGH RURAL GROUPS RATHER THAN THE GOVERNMENT AND GIVING CREDITS CONDITIONED ON A MORE STRICT EVALUATION THAT BE BENEFITS GO DIRECTLY TO THE POOR. THEY RECOMMENDED THAT ONE WAY TO MAKE OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY MORE EFFECTIVE WOULD BE TO HOLD OFF ON SENDING A NEW AMBASSADOR.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 189811

5. MS. DERIAN EXPLAINED THAT MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING SOME CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE U.S. AGREED WITH THIS POSITION, BUT THAT THEIR WAS ALSO UTILITY TO THE COUNTER ARGUMENT THAT WE SHOULD SEND A STRONG PERSON WHO WILL SPEAK CLEARLY TO THE

GOVERNMENT ABOUT OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POSITION. IN CLOSING MS. DERIAN ASKED WHETHER SHE SHOULD INQUIRE ABOUT ANY SPECIFIC PEOPLE BEING DETAINED WHEN SHE MET WITH THE PRESIDENT. THE CD REPRESENTATIVES ADVISED THAT THIS WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD TO THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED.

6. CHURCH GROUP

MS. DERIAN MET LATER IN THE MORNING OF AUGUST 2 WITH ARCHBISHOP ROMERO, JESUIT FATHERS JEREZ, FATHERS DELGADO AND OSTER AND THE DIRECTOR FOR PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH (GENERAL PASTORATE) OF THE ARCHDIOCESE. MS. DERIAN BEGAN BY EXPLAINING THE GREAT CONCERN IN THE US FOR THE WELFARE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN EL SALVADOR AND EXPRESSING PLEASURE THAT THE JESUIT FATHERS WERE PRESENT. SHE ASKED WHAT WE COULD AND SHOULD DO TO BE OF ASSISTANCE.

7. THE ARCHBISHOP THANKED HER FOR OUR CONCERN, STATING THAT FORMER AMBASSADOR LOZANO HAD VISITED HIM SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST. HE SAID THAT WHILE THINGS SEEMED QUIET AT PRESENT THE CAUSES OF INJUSTICE CONTINUED, PRIESTS, CATECHISTS AND RURAL FAMILIES CONTINUE TO BE HARRASSED AND THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO BE TENSE. THE CHURCH DID NOT FEEL COMPLETELY FREE TO PREACH MS. DERIAN WAS GIVEN A LIST OF RECENT INCIDENTS DESCRIBED AS A PLAN ON WHICH PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH IS CARRIED OUT. WHILE EXPRESSING HOPE FOR A CHANGE UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT THEY SAID THEY HADN'T SEEN IT YET AND SAID THEY WOULD ONLY TALK WITH ROMERO IF CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE MET. I.E. RESTORATION OF A CLIMATE OF CONFIDENCE WHICH CAN ONLY COME ABOUT WHEN PRIESTS CEASE TO BE DEPORTED AND CATECHISTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE TERRORIZED. THEY FEEL THEY REPRESENT THE ONLY AVAILABLE SPOKESMAN FOR THE SALVADORAN PEOPLE AND WISH TO PASS ANY DIALOGUE WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 06 STATE 189811

GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE PEOPLE.

8. MS. DERIAN REPEATED PRESIDENT ROMERO'S CRITICISM THAT THE CHURCH ONLY SPOKE WITH THE POOR. THE RESPONSE, PARTIALLY IN JEST, WAS THAT THEY TRIED TO TALK WITH THE RICH FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS TO LITTLE AVAIL AND SINCE THE COUNCIL OF MEDILLIN AND VATICAN II HAVE DECIDED TO BRING THE GOSPEL MORE DIRECTLY TO THE POOR. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO RUN SCHOOLS WHICH ARE USED MAINLY BY THE BETTER OFF FAMILIES AND COMPLAINED THAT WHEN THEY TOLD THE RICH TO RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR THEY WERE ACCUSED OF BEING COMMUNISTS. THEIR POINT WAS THAT NO ONE ELSE WORRIED ABOUT THE POOR IN EL SALVADOR. THEY POINTED TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF POOR WHO HAD QUOTE DISAPPEARED END QUOTE AND GAVE MS. DERIAN A REPORT OF ONE SUCH CASE. MS. DERIAN ASKED IF THE SALVADORAN CHURCH SPOKE WITH ONE VOICE. THE ANSWER WAS THAT WHILE SOME STILL WERE NOT CONVERTED TO THE CHURCH COURSE, ABOUT 95 PCT OF THE PRIESTS IN THIS ARCHDIOCESE WERE.

9. MS. DERIAN EXPLAINED THE US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IN
DETAIL AND OUTLINED OUR TWO MAIN OBJECTIVES OF FIRST
INFLUENCING A GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE A SITUATION AND SECOND
TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM REPRESSIVE REGIMES. SHE EXPRESSED
THE HOPE THAT THE SUPPORT WE CAN GIVE THROUGH OUR POLICY TO
GROUPS FIGHTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE HELPFUL. SHE SAID
SHE DIDNT KNOW WHAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD DO BUT BELIEVED
IN THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE AT THIS EARLY STAGE. SHE RESPECTED,
HOWEVER, THE CHURCH'S SENSITIVITY TO SEEMING TO BE CO-OPTED BY
SUCH DIALOGUE AND EXPLAINED THAT WE COULD BE LESS
WORRIED WITH THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND CHANGE AS LONG AS OUR
TACTICS HELPED TO ACHIEVE CHANGE FOR THE BETTER. SHE EXPLAINED
THAT WHILE WE WERE ENGAGED IN THE EARLY STAGES OF DIALOGUES
IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO PLAY TO THE PRESS
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 07 STATE 189811

BY ISSUING CRITICAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

10. THE ARCHBISHOP SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY HER STATEMENTS
AND WELCOMED FUTURE INTERCHANGE. HE DESCRIBED HUMAN RIGHTS
AS A UNIVERSAL GOAL TRANSCENDING NATIONAL AFFAIRS. MS. DERIAN
INVITED HIM TO USE OUR EMBASSY AS A CONDUIT FOR PASSING
INFORMATION TO CHURCH GROUPS IN THE US IF THIS WOULD BE
HELPFUL.

11. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION OF WHAT MEANS OF PRESSURE THE
USG COULD BRING TO BEAR, MS DERIAN DESCRIBED THE USE OF
MILITARY AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OUTLINING LEGAL
REQUIREMENTS AND THE DESIRABILITY OF MAINTAINING
FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR ADMINISTRATION WHERE LEGALLY POSSIBLE
TO DO SO. SHE ASKED FOR VIEWS ON HOW TO GRAPPLE WITH THE USE
OF PROGRAMS SUCH AS AID AND PEACE CORP WHICH ARE MORE
DIRECTLY AIMED AT HELPING THE NEEDY. THE PRIESTS WONDERED IF
THE US COULD ENSURE IT WENT TO THE TARGET GROUPS AND
POINTED OUT THIS TYPE OF AID WAS IRRELEVANT IN ANY CASE AS
A MEANS OF PRESSURE. POINTING TO THE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED
THE PRIESTS WONDERED IF THE US COULD NOT DO MORE TO CHANNEL
INTERNATIONAL CREDITS AND MARKET FORCES TO ENSURE GREATER
EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS OF THE POOR. MS DERIAN AGREED THIS WAS
A COMPLEX PROBLEM AND POINTED TO THE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS CAUSED
BY FEARS OF POLITICIZING THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS.

12. THE ARCHBISHOP ASKED IF THE US COULD HELP EL SALVADOR
BY ACCEPTING MORE IMMIGRANTS. MS DERIAN DESCRIBED THE
ENORMITY OF MIGRATION PROBLEMS WORLDWIDE, THE PRESSURES
CAUSED BY INTERNAL US UNEMPLOYMENT WHILE ADMITTING THAT POOR
IMMIGRANTS NORMALLY DON'T TAKE AWAY JOBS, AND LAMENTED THE FACT
THAT MORE IS NOT BEING DONE FOR PEOPLE FLEEING FROM POVERTY.
MS DERIAN ENDED BY OBSERVING THAT THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE
POOR CONTINUE TO RISE RAPIDLY AND THAT THE TIME LEFT TO RESPOND
IS RUNNING OUT. BEAL UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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